

*ARABIC LITERATURE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

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THE dawn of the nineteenth century marks a new era in the history of Arabic literature. After five centuries of mental lethargy, beginning with the irruption of the Mongols into the Muslim world in the thirteenth century, a renewed zeal for learning has dispelled the gloom which so long overshadowed the Arabic-speaking countries. Many factors were at work to bring about a beneficial change. The West began to take varied interest in the dormant East by collecting and studying its long-forgotten literatures. This interest led to a closer relation between Arabic-speaking countries and European nations, resulting happily in a Renaissance in Egypt and Syria especially. The natives of these countries began to study not only their own literature, but also the new literatures of the West.

This Renaissance swept away the cobwebs of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry. It created a new desire for knowledge, infused vitality into the dead, revived the dying, and produced a more tolerant, rational, and scholarly literature, and although it did not effect an immediate reformation in the East, it prepared the way; but until such reformation had been widely established, no real progress could be made.

The main factors of this new activity were the introduction of printing in Egypt and Syria, the practice of sending promising students from Egypt and Syria to finish their education in Europe, the founding of educational institutions, literary societies, and the publication of scientific, political, and literary journals in great centres. All these factors prepared the way for a general intellectual awakening and made possible a new conception of life.

After some years of slow progress, books on various modern subjects were either translated from European languages or compiled in Arabic by native authors who had received a Western education. The goal of their efforts was to introduce into the Arabic language what was needed of Western modern culture. Simultaneously with these efforts important educational work was being carried on by

Orientalists. Most of the literature of the golden age of Islam, though fortunately preserved from destruction, had been relegated to oblivion for many centuries. This literature, which attests a marvellous activity of intellect, and which had preserved and transmitted the learning and priceless treasures of ancient Greece and Rome to modern times, proved to be of inestimable value both to the West and to the East.

When its value had been realized, the study of Arabic was revived in European universities. To facilitate the study of the language and its literature, manuscripts were collected and edited by scholars.

The printing presses of Europe, Syria, and Egypt gave publicity to a great number of linguistic, historical, philosophical, geographical, and religious works. A far larger quantity, however, still remains scattered in Western, Eastern, public, and private libraries.

Modern Arabic literature dates from the French expedition to Egypt in 1797. It is greatly influenced by Western civilization and modern thought, which contributed a good deal to its contents, but did not affect its fundamental characteristics. Among the many forces which co-operated in creating such influence was the employment of European teachers in educational institutions in Egypt and Syria, especially during the reign of Mohammed Ali Pasha.

With all his illiteracy and vices he had a genuine desire to improve the condition of his subjects. As there were no books in the Arabic language on modern science, official translating offices were instituted, in which European and native scholars were engaged; and after some years of such work, in addition to individual efforts, books were available, and some sort of modern education was possible for the people. Individual translations and original works were undertaken by many Egyptian and Syrian natives. At the beginning they had many difficulties, the greatest of which was how to render new technical terms in the Arabic language. Old Arabic literature, which might have lessened such difficulties, was not yet studied, and unfortunately many of them were afraid to face criticism by introducing foreign words into Arabic. For there were those who had their ideals only in the past and who condemned all innovations.

Yet there were others whose ideals were in the future, who realized that all progressive languages must borrow from one another. There is a considerable controversial literature in Arabic on this subject of borrowing foreign words. The general tendency had been, and still

is, towards keeping the language pure from foreign vocables, so that practically all such words used in the Arabic language were carefully collected and their equivalents given.

The following are names of some books dealing with this subject :—

- (1) الدليل الى مرادف العامى والدخيل  
تأليف عطية اللبناني
- (2) كتاب الاشتقاق والتعريب  
تأليف عبد القادر المغربي
- (3) تهذيب العامى والمحرف  
تأليف حسن على البدر اوى
- (4) تهذيب الألفاظ العامية  
تأليف الشيخ محمد على الدسوقي
- (5) معجم الألفاظ الحديثة  
تأليف محمد بيك دياب
- (6) لف القماط على تصحيح ما استعمله العامة من العرب والدخيل  
والأغلاط، تأليف صديق حسن القنوجى الهندى
- (7) اصول الكلمات العامية  
تأليف حسن افندى قوفيق

In their efforts to supply Arabic equivalents for foreign words, the critics, believing that the Arabic language has the richest vocabulary of all languages, and is therefore capable of expressing all new ideas, had recourse to the rule of derivation from Arabic roots.

Here are some examples of foreign words and their newly coined Arabic equivalents :—

FOREIGN.	ARABIC.	MEANING.
اَكْسِبِرِسْ	الْعَاجِلَةُ	Express train.
أَمْنِيُوسْ	الْحَافِلَةُ	Omnibus.
أَتُومِبِيلْ	سَيَّارَةٌ	Automobile.
تَلْفُونْ	مِسرَّةٌ	Telephone.
تِلْغَرَاڤْ	إِشَارَةٌ بَرَقِيَّةٌ	Telegraph.
بَنْكْ	مَصْرَفٌ	Bank.
بَسَاڤُورْتْ	جَوَازٌ	Passport.
تِلِسْكَوْبْ	مِرْقَبٌ	Telescope.
تِيَاْتَرُوْ	مَلْعَبٌ	Theatre.
جُوَانْتِيْ	قُفَاظٌ	Gloves.
اِسْتِپَالِيَّةٌ	مُسْتَشْفَى	Hospital.
اَنْتِيْكَخَانَةٌ	مَتْحَفٌ	Museum.

The efforts of these native scholars were not confined to supplying Arabic words for foreign ones, but they attempted also to supply correct classical forms for all colloquialisms that have crept into the language. It must be stated, however, that there are very few people who know or take the trouble to use a classical form instead of a foreign or colloquial one, and although there are local colloquial differences in North Africa, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, there is no colloquial written literature.

Modern Arabic literature differs from the old both in its form and content. In form, it is free from bombastic and affected style. Most modern writers, especially those who had Western liberal education and knew other languages than Arabic, expressed themselves in words of common use.

They adopted the language in which they could address the largest audience, and gave up imitating the style of old writers; they arranged subjects under sections, chapters, headings, and gave illustrations and indexes. They were aware of the fact that they were writing for the people and not for the learned few.

In content, modern Arabic literature had been enriched by having new and very useful additions from modern European literature. These additions range over all branches of modern science and art.

In science, works were first prepared by European teachers in Egyptian and Syrian educational centres, and were then translated by natives who were specially employed for such work.

The following are some of the earlier translated and composed works in Arabic:—

#### MEDICAL WORKS TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH

- (1) القول الصريح في علم التشريح

This is the first medical work translated into Arabic and was published in 1832.

It was translated by the Syrian يوسف عنجورى

- (2) رسالة في تطعيم الجدري

Translated by an Egyptian (احمد الرشيدى) (died 1865).

- (3) الدرر الغوال في معالجة امراض الاطفال

Translated by an Egyptian (محمد بيك الشافعى)

- (4) أصول الفلسفة الطبيعية

Translated by (ابراهيم النبراوى) (died 1862).

#### MEDICAL WORKS COMPOSED BY NATIVES

Works by (محمد على باشا البقلى) (died 1876).

- (1) روضة النجاح الكبرى في العمليات الجراحية الصغرى

- (2) غرر الفلاح في اعمال الجراح  
 (3) غاية الفلاح في فن الجراح

These works were published in 1259, 1262, and 1281 A.H. respectively.

Works by احمد حسن الرشيدى (died 1865).

- (1) بهجة الروساء في امراض النساء  
 (2) نزهة الاقبال في مداواة الأطفال  
 (3) الروضة البهية في مداواة الامراض الجلدية  
 (4) عمدة المحتاج في علمى الادوية والعلاج

This last work comprises four large volumes, and was published in 1283 A.H.

#### MATHEMATICAL WORKS

Works by (محمد يوى) (died 1851).

- (1) ثمرة الاكتساب في علم الحساب  
 (2) كتاب الجبر والمقابلة  
 (3) الهندسة الوصفية

Works by (محمود باشا الفلكى) (died 1855).

- (1) رسالة في التقاويم الاسر ائيلية الاسلامية  
 (2) التقاويم العربية قبل الاسلام  
 (3) رسالة في مقياس مصر و مكيا لها و ميزا نها و مقابلة ذلك  
 بالاقيسة الفرنسية

## TRANSLATION OF POETICAL AND LITERARY WORKS

Translations into Arabic were also made from ancient and modern Aryan literatures.

From the Persian the *Rubā'iyāt* of 'Umar *Khayyām* and the *Gulistān* of Sa'di had been translated into Arabic.

The first by **وديع البستاني**. The second by **حبرائيل مخلع الدمشقي**.

From the Greek, **سليمان البستاني** translated Homer's epic poem in very fine Arabic verse.

The following Shakespeare plays have been translated: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Othello*.

Translations were also made from the French, especially from the works of La Fontaine, Corneille, Racine, Molière, Hugo, and Dumas.

The translation of plays from French and English, and the interest which the acting of such dramatic representations had created in Syria and Egypt, led many zealous natives to write original plays in Arabic, and thus enriched the language by a new literature and long-neglected art.

The history of the Arabic drama begins from about the middle of the nineteenth century. A Syrian native of Sidon, named **مارون**

**النقاش** (1817-55), wrote the first Arabic play called *The Miser*, which was acted in 1848. He wrote many plays in Arabic, besides those which he had translated from Italian and French, thus creating sufficient interest in this new art for it to be carried on by other writers. In 1878 a notable play in a versified form, the first in the Arabic language, was produced by another Syrian scholar, named **خليل**

**اليازجي** (1856-89), under the title of *المروءة والوفاء*, showing the virtues of pre-Islamic Arabs.

As we pass on towards the latter years of the century we meet with more prolific writers, the greatest of whom was **نجيب الحداد** (1867-99), a writer and translator of many plays. From English he translated (1) *Romeo and Juliet*, under the Arabic title of *شهداء الغرام*, and (2) *The Talisman*, by Sir Walter Scott, bearing the Arabic title of

صلاح الدين. Among his translations from French are—(1) *Le Cid*, by Corneille, giving it the Arabic name of السيد. (2) *Hernani*, by Victor Hugo, with the name of حمدان. Among his original Arabic plays are—(1) الطيب المنسوب, (2) ثارات العرب, (3) المهدي السوداني.

It might have been expected that the building of the Cairo Opera House by Ismail Pasha in 1869 would have helped in the development of this new branch in the Arabic literature. But as it was built for the entertainment of a master-jobber and his immediate circle, who knew as much of the language of the people as they cared for their happiness, only foreign language was used in that opera.

Schools and societies entertained the people until theatrical companies were formed in Syria and Egypt, and greater numbers of plays were produced.

Egypt contributed her share for the development of the Arabic drama by producing men who wrote original Arabic plays and translated foreign ones. Among writers of Arabic plays was عبدالله نديم

(1844–96). His two plays *العرب* and *الوطن* were performed before the Khedive Tawfik, who, after rewarding the author, sent him to exile.

Another noteworthy poet and scholar was عثمان بيك جلال (1829–98), who translated in colloquial Arabic poetry three French plays by Racine, namely, *Esther*, *Iphigénie*, and *Alexandre Le Grand*. It is interesting to note that these plays are the first to be put into modern colloquial Arabic poetry. This same author translated also the *Fables* of La Fontaine into colloquial Arabic poetry under the title *العيون اليواقظ في الأمثال والمواعظ*.

The following are the opening lines of *Alexandre Le Grand* :—

انت نويت انك تحاربه ياترى هوانت لك على اسنكدرمقدرة  
غلب ملوك اسيا الجميع بقوته واغلب الدنيا بقت في قبضته



اوعى لعقلك ياأخى وافتكرا  
احسن يقولوا الناس عليك فمخك عكرا  
يامامدن اتعرضت له فى الحراب  
وصبحت بعد الهزيمة كوم تراب  
اياك تنقص فى الكلام والاتزيد  
لتروح اسير عنده مكبل فى الحديد

Modern Arabic literature has been impregnated with countless romances and historical novels. The greatest modern novel writer was جرجى زيدان (1861-1914). He wrote a series of historical novels, sketching the Arabic history and Moslem dynasties in a clear, simple, and very interesting style. These historical novels created interest to so wide an extent that most of them have been translated into many languages.

#### JOURNALISM

The introduction of journalism into Arabic literature is associated with the name of Mohammed Ali Pasha, who founded an Arabic official gazette in 1828 under the title of *الوقائع المصرية*, the only paper that has an unbroken existence to the present day. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the progress of the Arabic press was very rapid; and many daily, weekly, and monthly publications were founded in the great centres of Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, besides many more in Europe and America. Many of these publications had an ephemeral existence like most Eastern enterprises. The reasons for this characteristic are only known to those who understand the psychology of the East.

The following works should be consulted for a complete history of the Arabic press :—

(1) *جامع التصانيف المصرية الحديثة من سنة ١٣٠١ الى ١٤١٠*

هجريّة. This work was compiled by an Egyptian scholar named

عبد الله الأنصاري, and was printed by the Government Press of Bulaq in 1312 A.H. ; one section of the work deals with journalism.

(2) *The Arabic Press of Egypt* by Martin Hartmann, printed by Luzac & Co. in 1899.

(3) The last chapter in *Littérature Arabe*, by Clément Huart.

أريخ الصحافة العربية، يحتوى على اخبار كل جريدة ومجلة (4)  
 عربية ظهرت فى العالم شرقا وغربا مع رسوم اصحابها والمحررين  
 فيها و تراجم مشاهيرهم بقلم  
 الفيكونت فيليب دى طرازى

From its title this Arabic work claims to give the history of every Arabic paper in the world, with photographs of proprietors and editors and their biographies. Other sources of information on the Arabic press are given on pages 20 to 28 of this last work.

#### ARABIC POETRY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Heredity, spiritual and intellectual environments are the creators of a poet's imagination in all ages and in all nations. Poetry is a natural gift to Arabs, and its quality is determined by, and subject to, the intellectual environment in which they live. Arabic poetry of the nineteenth century is the product of many races, with natural characteristics and degrees of education, and is not therefore the same in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Arabia, and North Africa. In some of these countries where modern civilization is either despised by the inhabitants or not within their reach, Arabic poetry is still primitive in its form and content. In others, where works of European poets had been studied and comparison in form and content made, new diction and ideas were introduced into modern Arabic literature. A wider range of subjects occupied the attention of modern poets. The modern Arabic muse is struggling to adjust itself to the new world by assimilating its new ideas when and where it is possible to have access to such ideas. It is sad to reflect that modern education in all Arabic speaking nations has been either neglected or purposely denied to the people. Those who were fortunate enough to have access to education, and to raise themselves a little higher in the scale of humanity, were self-educated men. The quantity and quality of modern Arabic poetry would undoubtedly have been greater had there been facilities for modern education.

Modern Arabic poetry is not all expressed in that specialized kind of diction used by old poets. Many poets of the century disregarded the use of *روي*, just as many writers disregarded

rhymed prose. They also employed new metres which do not come within the sixteen classical forms with all their difficult technicalities. Again, to many modern poets it is no longer a mark of erudition to adorn their versification with a hundred and one verbal niceties, such as exordium, paronomasia, peroration, etc.

SOME EGYPTIAN POETS AND PROSE WRITERS OF THE PERIOD

(1) الشيخ محمد المهدي (1737-1815).

He was born of Christian parents and later in life became a Muslim, studying for some years at Al-Azhar University at Cairo, and finally becoming its rector in 1812. His work, which bears the title of

تحفة المستيقظ الأنا في نزهة المستنير الناعس, was written in imitation of *Arabian Nights*. It was translated into French by Jean-Josef Marcel under the title of *Contes du Cheykh El Mahdi*.

(2) السيد علي درويش (died 1853).

He was educated at Al-Azhar and became a court poet to Abbas I. His work was collected by one of his pupils and lithographed in 482 pages, under the title of الأشعار بحميد الأَشعار.

Examples of his poetry :—

From an eulogy.

سررت بنيل القصد من غير موعد ولا شئ أشهى من سرور مجد  
سررت بنعماء ولكن حزن من قصوري بحق الشكر في فضل سيدي  
Of the two great pyramids.

انظر الى الهرميين واعلم انني فيما اراه منهما مبهوت  
رسخا على صدر الزمان وقلبه لم ينهضا حتى الزمان يموت

His prose belongs to the old style, as the following lines on virtue and vice show :—

وقفك الله لما يرضاه وعصمك من موجب الدم ومن لا يتحاشاه  
ان الفضيلة والرذيلة صفتان متضادتان ونوع الانسان مجبول على الاولى  
والفرار من الاحزى.

(3) الشيخ محمد شهاب الدين (1803-57).

He was educated at Al-Azhar and became the editor of the government gazette *الوقائع المصرية*. He left a work under the title of *سفينة الملك ونفيسة الفلك*, a very interesting book on music and Arabic songs, to which he contributed a great deal of his own composition in the new metres known as *موال*، *اهازيج*، *موالى*،

*زجليات*. He also left a diwan of poetry, of 380 pages, which was published in 1277 A.H. These two lines describe a sundial in the mosque of Mohammed Ali:—

ومظهرة للوقت ظهرا وغيره      وللبرج أيضا فهي واحدة العصر  
سلامة منشى رسمها وحسابها      لجامع خيرات تفرد في مصر

An eulogy of the Pope:—

بابا النصرارى مر بى روح ملتهم      حامى حمى كل شماس وقسيس  
شخص ولكن هيولى روحه ملك      وجسمه صورة فى شكل قديس  
اقام وهو وحيد العصر مفرده      دين النصرارى بتثليث وتغطيس  
تسعى الملول اللى تقبيل راحته      فى البحر والبر فوق الفلك والعيس  
احيا الكنائس جسا بعد ما درست      وشيد الروح تشييدا بتأسيس  
فعمظوا الرب فيها بالصلاة له      ومجدوه بتسبيح وتقديس

(4) السيد على ابو النصر المنفلوطى (died 1881).

He was a native of a town in Upper Egypt, and had the usual education of his time. His genius brought him to the notice of Ismail Pasha, who made him his court poet. His diwan was published in 1300 A.H.

The following are the opening lines of a poem on wine :—

بنت كرم دونها بنت الكرام وهي بنت زفها ساق المدام  
شمس راح في اصطباح اشرفت في سماء الكأس كالبدرا التمام  
كم تجلى كأسها عن لؤلؤ من حباب كالدرارى في انتظام

(5) السيده عائشة التيمورية (1840-1902).

This poetess had the fortune to study Persian, Turkish, and Arabic literatures, and to compose songs in the three languages. She

left a collection of poems in a diwan called *حلية الطراز*, which was published more than once.

She wrote the following lines on her literary achievement as a woman :—

بيد العفاف اصون عز حجابى وبعصمتى اسمو على اترابى  
وبفكرة وقادة وقريحة نقادة قد كملت آدابى  
ماضرنى أدبى وحسن تعلمى الابكونى زهرة الألباب  
ما عاقنى خجلى عن العليا ولا سدل الخمار بلمتى وتقابى

(6) محمود باشا سامى البارودى (1840-1904).

Although of Turkish descent and educated for the army, he cultivated a very high literary taste in Arabic. He held high offices, culminating in that of Prime Minister during Arabi's revolt. He wrote many poems, the longest of which runs into 600 verses, written in imitation of the *بردة*.

These are the opening lines of a poem on ambition—

سواى بتحنان الأغارىديطرب وغيرى باللذات يلهو وبلعب  
وما أنا ممن تأمر الخمر لبه ويملك سمعيه اليراع المثقب  
ولكن أخوم اذا ما ترجحت به سورة نحو العلا راح يدأب

## LINGUISTIC WORKS OF THE PERIOD

The educational ideals of the century demanded new subjects and new methods of teaching. To meet this demand works on the history, literature, grammar, and practical study of the Arabic language were composed during the second half of the century. On the development of the language as a living medium for expressing ideas in all its history, and its relationship with Semitic and Aryan languages, the best work

is that written by the prolific author جرحى زيدان. The work has the Arabic title :—

تاريخ اللغة العربية باعتبارها كائن حي خاضع لقانون الارتقاء

Many works have been written on the literature of the language, but the most complete is that by the same author, which deals with the whole history of Arabic literature. It comprises four volumes, and has the Arabic title :—

تاريخ آداب اللغة العربية، يشتمل على تاريخ آداب اللغة العربية وعلومها وما حوته من العلوم والآداب على اختلاف مواضعها وتراجم العلماء والأدباء والشعراء وسائر آداب القرائح ووصف مولفاتهم وأماكن وجودها أو طبعها من أقدم أزمنة التاريخ إلى الآن.

The following other works deal with special periods :—

- (1) آداب اللغة العربية في العصر العباسي  
تأليف الشيخ الاسكندري
- (2) تاريخ علم الأدب  
لحفي بيك ناصف
- (3) آداب اللغة العربية  
لمحمد المرصفي

- (4) تاريخ الأداب العربية في القرن التاسع عشر  
للأب شيخو
- (5) أعيان البيان من صبح القرن الثالث عشر الهجرى الى اليوم  
تأليف حسن السند وبنى
- (6) مجانى الأدب  
للأب لويس شيخو
- (7) ادبيات اللغة العربية، لنظارة المعارف المصرية

In addition to many commentaries on old standard grammars, the following are some of the new works on this branch of study:—

(a) *Grammars*

- (1) فصل الخطاب فى النحو والصرف
- (2) تأليف الشيخ ناصيف اليازجى
- (3) الجمان فى علم البيان
- (4) غنية الطالب فى الصرف والنحو تأليف أحمد فارس

- (5) فك التقليد فى علم الصرف
- (6) الخواطر الحسان فى المعانى والبيان
- (7) فلسفة البلاغة
- (8) الخواطر العرب فى النحو والأعراب
- تأليف جورج ضومط

(b) *Lexicons*

- (1) المنجد فى اللغة العربية  
تأليف الأب لويس شيخو

(2)	تأليف أحمد	الجاسوس على القاموس
(3)	فارس	
(4)	تأليف بطرس	محيط المحيط
(5)	البستاني	دائرة المعارف

#### GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL WORKS OF THE PERIOD

Interest was not lacking in the study of ancient and modern history, and many works were composed to meet the consequent demand. These new works deal with general, national, and local histories. Some were written by conservative authors who worship the past as regards style and record and collection of facts, and others were written by men who had some knowledge of literary criticism.

#### SOME EGYPTIAN HISTORIANS

(1) الشيخ عبد الله الشرقاوى (died 1812).

Like his contemporaries, he studied at the only educational centre, Al-Azhar, of which he was a rector. Besides his many religious works he left—

(a) تحفة الناظرين في من ولى مصر من السلاطين

(b) التحفة البهية في طبقات الشافعية

(2) عبد الرحمن الجبرتي (1754–1825).

His fame brought him to the notice of the French during their short occupation of Egypt, and he was employed in the Arabic office which was then established.

His well-known history عجائب الآثار في التراجم والأخبار is a completion of Ibn Iyas's work on the history of Egypt. It has been translated into French. He left us another history, called مظهر التقديس بذهاب دولة الفرنسيين, which has been translated into French and Turkish.



## (3) رفاعة بيك رافع (1801-73).

He was a native of Upper Egypt, and after he spent some years at Al-Azhar, he was sent to France with the First Egyptian Educational Mission in 1825. On his return to Egypt he was engaged as translator in the School of Medicine, from which he was promoted to be director of the School of Languages. He has left us eighteen works, consisting of translations and original treatises on various subjects.

His geographical works are :—

(a) جغرافيه ملظبرن

(b) التعرفات الشافية لمريد الجغرافية

His historical works are :—

(a) قلائد المفخر في غريب الأوائل والأواخر

(b) بداية القدماء وهداية الحكماء في تاريخ قدماء اليونان

(c) انوار توفيق الجليل في أخبار مصر وتوثيق بني اسماعيل

(d) نهاية الايجاز في سيرة ساكن الحجاز

(To be continued.)